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So Young Song

University of Tennessee, ssong9@vols.utk.edu

Youn-Kyung Kim

University of Tennessee, ykim13@utk.edu

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Altercentric versus Egocentric “Green Jeans” Advertising: Impact on Dual Emotional Warmth

So Young Song and Youn-Kyung Kim,
University of Tennessee, USA

Keywords: Ethical Apparel, Warmth, Impure-altruism, Warm-glow.

1. Introduction

This study presents theoretical and empirical analyses of altruism, egoism, and impure altruism and explains the role of emotional warmth in purchasing green jeans. Blue jeans have become focus of attention for sustainability in the apparel industry because of their negative environmental and societal impacts in the manufacturing process. To counteract this issue, green jeans have been marketed to foster ecological, ethical, and humanistic views of consumption (D’Souza, 2015). In this study, we explain the existence of impurely altruistic consumers whose motivations stem from a co-occurrence of altruistic and egoistic warmth. Impure altruism is neither truly altruistic nor egoistic but a combination of altruism and egoism that connects “feeling good” and “doing good.” Through the lens of Andreoni’s (1990) theory of warm-glow giving, we explore how altercentric and egocentric message orientations influence consumers’ perceptions of benefits. We posit that altercentric messages influence perceived societal benefits such as self-transcendence and social responsibility and that egocentric messages influence perceived personal benefits such as perceived uniqueness and quality of clothing. Further, these perceived benefits are posited to influence altruistic and egoistic warmth, and ultimately purchase intention. In testing these relationships, we investigate the relationship between dual emotional warmth constructs, altruistic warmth and egoistic warmth, in illustrating impure altruism and influencing purchase intention.

2. Hypotheses Development

- H1: Consumers will perceive a higher level of societal benefits such as perceived self-transcendence (H1a) and social responsibility (H1b) when they view an altercentric green Jeans advertisement than when they view an egocentric green Jeans advertisement.
- H2: Consumers will perceive a higher level of personal benefits such as perceived uniqueness (H2a) and quality of clothing (H2b) when they view an egocentric green jeans advertisement than when they view an altercentric green Jeans advertisement.
- H3: Perceived self-transcendence will positively affect the feeling of altruistic warmth.
- H4: Perceived social responsibility will positively affect the feeling of altruistic warmth.
- H5: Perceived uniqueness of clothing will positively affect the feeling of egoistic warmth.
- H6: Perceived quality of clothing will positively affect the feeling of egoistic warmth.
- H7: The feeling of altruistic warmth will positively affect the feeling of egoistic warmth.
- H8: The feeling of altruistic warmth will positively affect purchase intention.
- H9: The feeling of egoistic warmth will positively affect purchase intention.

3. Methods and Results

A quasi-experiment was conducted to estimate a comparison effect between two groups (i.e., altercentric vs. egocentric message) using eight green jeans advertising stimuli (four ads depicting altercentric and four ads depicting egocentric message). In the eight green jean stimuli, the benefit orientation factor was manipulated by textual priming using either “We” (i.e., altercentric) or “I” (i.e., egocentric) and by shifting the attributes of benefit toward collectivism or self with different ad messaging or visual layout. These ads described various sustainability dimensions (i.e., environmentalism, ethics, and egoistic altruism), but with an identical brand, “Sunshineblue,” a new denim jeans brand created for this experiment. A total of 586 usable responses (after manipulation check) were collected from online consumer panelists. The scale items were adapted from the existing studies. The result from MANOVA indicated that there was a significant difference in benefit perception based on message orientation: $F = 3.888, p < .01$; Wilk's $\lambda = .974$, partial $\eta^2 = .026$. The results of univariate tests were all significant as well ($p < .05$). Sequentially, a two-sample t-test revealed that consumers perceived higher levels of both societal benefits of self-transcendence ($t = 2.179, p < .05$) and social responsibility ($t = 2.096, p < .05$) and personal benefits of uniqueness of clothing ($t = 2.721, p < .01$) and quality of clothing ($t = 3.649, p < .001$) when they viewed an egocentric advertisement, not supporting H1a and H1b, while supporting H2a and H2b. To test H3-H9, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) validated the measurement model. The construct validities were evaluated by both convergent and discriminant validity. Goodness-of-fit statistics of structural model were satisfactory: $\chi^2 (471) = 1646.129, p < .001$; χ^2 / df ratio = 3.49; CFI = .945; TLI = .9383; NFI = .925; and RMSEA = .065. All path coefficients were significant ($p < .001$), supporting all hypothesized relationships in structural model (H3-H9): $\beta = 0.472$ (H3); $\beta = 0.477$ (H4); $\beta = 0.213$ (H5); $\beta = 0.172$ (H6); $\beta = 0.521$ (H7); $\beta = 0.437$ (H8); $\beta = 0.454$ (H9).

4. Implication

MANOVA results indicate that incorporating self-benefit and self-expression into green jeans advertisements can create elevated effects on the perceived societal benefit more so than altercentric messages can. Results from our structural model reveal that altruistic warmth considerably influences egoistic warmth ($\beta = 0.521, p < 0.001$), indicating the presence of impurely altruistic consumers. By emphasizing self-oriented messages (e.g., highlighting self-efficacy and personal benefits) rather than altercentric messages, ethical apparel marketing can provide an effective solution to encourage more sustainable behavior. In terms of promotion strategies, we suggest that effective advertisements must incorporate both altruistic and egoistic feeling of warmth as two key factors influencing altruistic apparel purchases. Retailers can adopt feel-good marketing strategies by emphasizing personal style, uniqueness, good quality, and consumers' fashion choices that make them look good, feel good, and do good.

5. References

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